

Forest of Dean RC Churches - creating a sustainable, stronger future for our Church, now and for future generations.

Inspired! is actively encouraging and supporting all Forest Catholics to become co-owners of our Church locally: taking responsibility for fulfilling its mission through inclusive decision-making and involvement in the spectrum of Church activities.



Text of Pip's video invitation to all Forest Catholics to join in

Hello

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Pip Deave, and I'm chair of the pastoral council for the Forest Catholic Churches.

Picture this scene: 8.30 mass, Belmont Abbey, 55 years ago. Mass has begun (a quick one, no music, in and out in half an hour, job done!). In walk a young mother and her five small children, traipsing into the front pew, jostling, messing about - eldest age 8, and youngest 1. Four boys, one girl in the middle.

Why am I telling you this? Because that girl was me. And things are different now.

From that exercise in self-discipline for the 5 year old girl amongst her brothers to the 60 year old woman trying to draw her fellow Catholics together to make important choices about the future of our community here in the Forest.

I was at college in London and moved here over 30 years ago with a toddler and baby of my own (thankfully not five!)

I tried to bring them up as Catholics but there was nothing at any of the local churches for children and I struggled to keep my children under control during mass (more than 30 minutes!). I used to go home so frustrated that in the end I gave up.

So I carried on going to mass on my own. I tried to arrive on time, kept my head down, and scuttled out afterwards. Being a catholic. Job done.

How different is it now? Not much!

However, we do live in a very different world to 50, or 30, or even 5 years ago!

We know there are many fewer priests, but we can rise to the challenge of organising ourselves in how we worship together and how we open our doors to the wider community. It would be wonderful to recover our sense of belonging, in the knowledge that we are part of a people. A people of the Forest of Dean with shared history, traditions and culture.

We have just endured an unprecedented pandemic and all that came with it. Fear, isolation, not to mention the deaths and separation. Some rallied round with phone calls and helping the isolated with shopping. But how good were we? Did we even know everyone who might require support?

We couldn't attend mass but managed to set up video recordings, which are very popular and we plan to continue as live streams too. It has widened our reach, enabling more people to worship at a time that fits in with busy lives.

Please turn over...

Things ARE different. Not just since the pandemic. We are now aware of the damage we are causing the environment. Can we justify maintaining 3 churches in the Forest, each used for a few hours a week?

Pope Francis writes in his book *Let us Dream*:

"The change of era, accelerated by corona virus, is a moment for reading the signs of the times. A gap has opened between the realities and challenges we face and the recipes and solutions available to us. That gap becomes a space in which to reflect, question and dialogue."

Now is the time to lift our heads and look outwards. At the people around us and how we can help them. Young people reaching out for some form of spiritual support - can we be there for them? The unemployed? Young families - can we help provide some spiritual foundation? The elderly - can we offer them practical support, companionship, friendship and dignity.

The future relies on the conjunction of the young and the old.

We can't carry on living in the same way. We need to change.

Today, appropriately supported by the Holy Spirit, we are launching our project called "inspired!" With your help, we plan to share this leaflet as widely as we can. Pass it on to anyone who may be interested: Catholics who no longer go to church, people who have become disenfranchised with the church. We invite everyone to put down some thoughts and ideas to open a dialogue so that, as a community, we can join together and move forward.

And please pray with us.

Please write as much or as little as you want and email, post or return to church.

Or you can talk to one of us on the phone (01594 833173), or arrange a visit to your home.

It's no longer about just going to mass on Sunday, head down, job done.

The job is just begun!

Please also see:

Fr Barnabas's videos:

#1 <https://vimeo.com/518752504> (includes Fr. Barnabas's bullet points)

#2 <https://vimeo.com/533554621>

Pip's video: <https://youtu.be/ye4W5wP0w8E>

Inspired! leaflet: <http://forestrc.co.uk/pdfs/Inspire-Leaflet.pdf>

The informative first Inspired! leaflet invites all Forest Catholics to consider what we like about our Church community, what we don't like and what we'd like to improve.

It goes on to ask us what skills and talents we can contribute to building up our Church community and, in view of fewer priests and increasing environmental and financial constraints, to offer ideas for plans to ensure its sustainable, strong and hopeful future.

The inspired! team are:

Pip Deave (Chair)

Fr Barnabas

Fiona Mills

Helen Crawford

Dorota Rapacz

Kate Gunn

**you...?*

You're welcome to join us!